



Search and rescue efforts in a village in northern Idlib, north-west Syria. 7 February 2023. Credit: OCHA/Ali Haj Suleiman

Situation Overview

UN and partners are preparing the first cross-border aid convoy to north-west Syria since a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck southern Türkiye on 6 February. The cross-border operation was temporarily disrupted as the road connecting Gaziantep to the UN Transshipment Hub in Hatay was impaired. As of 8 February, two alternative routes have been identified to reach the Hub following feasibility assessments, from Gaziantep via Kilis-Kirikhan and from Mersin via Adana-Kirikhan.

UN cross-border assistance has served as a lifeline to millions in north-west Syria since 2014. The Bab Al-Hawa at the Türkiye-Syria border is the single remaining border-crossing [authorized by the Security Council](#) for UN aid delivery. In 2022, some 600 trucks loaded with aid crossed Türkiye each month, reaching 2.6 million Syrians on average.

“We have a glimmer of hope that we can reach people,” said Muhannad Hadi, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis in a [press briefing](#) today. “We are hoping that tomorrow we will be able to deliver something across the border,” he added.

The emergency response to the earthquake continues on its third day. Death tolls in Türkiye and north-west Syria are climbing by the hour, reaching more than 11,000 people as of 8 February – a 450 per cent increase since the reported figure in the [first OCHA Flash Update](#). At least 648 aftershocks have been reported.

Responder teams from around the world are being mobilized to Türkiye. According to Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) of Türkiye, the total number of search and rescue personnel in the region is

79,110 as of the morning of 8 February. A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) response team dedicated to the response in Gaziantep landed in Adana on 8 February. Plans are underway for further deployments to Kahramanmaraş and potentially to Adiyaman.

Meanwhile, the situation remains grim in north-west Syria where only five per cent of reported sites are being covered by search and rescue operations. The lack of heavy machines to remove rubble and winter weather conditions have significantly complicated these efforts. Major power outages have resulted in fuel shortages in hospitals. As many as 11,000 families are now homeless, according to local authorities. Over 5,000 injuries and 2,000 deaths have been reported.

In a [joint statement](#) released on 7 February, Mr. Hadi appealed “to all donor partners to provide the assistance necessary to alleviate suffering,” following the release of a [\\$25 million grant](#) by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) on the same day. The [Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund \(SCHF\)](#), which allocated \$138 million in 2022, is currently limited and requires donors to further support 2023 activities with a focus on the earthquake response.

Updates in Türkiye

Impact and humanitarian needs

- At least 9,057, deaths and 52,979 injuries have been confirmed by the Government of Türkiye. The top three most affected districts by number of deaths are Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Gaziantep. In Hatay alone, the number of death is as high as 3,356.
- Deaths and injuries have so far been reported in Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Adana, Adiyaman, Osmaniye, Hatay, Kilis, Malatya and Elazığ provinces.
- At least 6,444 buildings have reportedly collapsed in the country.
- As of 7 February, airports in Kahramanmaraş and Hatay remain closed due to damage. Airports in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa are open to humanitarian flights. Airports in Malatya, Adana, Diyarbakır, Adiyaman Airports are open to flights.
- Gas flow through pipelines has been stopped in Kahramanmaraş and Gaziantep to mitigate risks of explosions.
- Schools in the affected provinces remain closed for at least one week.
- A number of key transportation routes have been impaired.
- The Government of Türkiye issued a Level 4 alarm on 6 February calling for international assistance.

Humanitarian response

- According to AFAD, the number of search and rescue personnel in the region is 98,153 personnel, including 5,309 international personnel from 18 countries.
- UNDAC, International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) response teams and Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) are being mobilized to Türkiye. An UNDAC team dedicated to the response in Gaziantep arrived in Adana on 8 February with further deployments to Kahramanmaraş and potentially Adiyaman.
- More than 8,000 people have been rescued from the rubble of the buildings. Besides rescue teams, blankets, tents, food and psychological support teams were also sent to affected regions.

Updates in north-west Syria

Impact

- According to local authorities, more than 2,000 deaths and 5,000 injuries have been reported in at least 56 areas north-west Syria. The numbers are expected to continue to climb as numerous people remain stuck in debris.

- More than 2,000 buildings have been completely destroyed and more than 5,100 buildings have been partially destroyed. Local authorities indicate that over 11,000 families are now homeless.
- Preliminary assessments indicate that the sub-districts of Harim, Atmeh, Sarmada, Atareb, and Kafr Takharim are among the worst hit areas.

Humanitarian needs

- Primary needs identified include: 1) heavy machines for debris removal, 2) cash distribution, 3) tents, isolation sheets and NFIs, 4) heating materials, 5) emergency food and bread assistance, 6) water trucking and garbage removals, 7) ambulances and medicines, 8) fuel for hospitals and health centers, 9) rental trucks and vans to transport people, 10) reception centers for IDPs and 11) safe spaces for women and girls.
- Major power outage has resulted in fuel shortages in hospitals. Hospitals and blood donations centers need support to treat the injured.
 - The Health Cluster report that urgent medical needs in hospitals include serums, gauze bandages, painkillers, medical plaster and blood bags.
 - Other urgent needs include fuel for generators and heating as well as burial bags. At least 20 hospitals have registered a request for blood units and at least two hospitals are out of service in the Idleb governorate.
- Homelessness and onward movement exacerbate protection risks including those related to unexploded ordinance. It is anticipated that the earthquake will force people onto contaminated land, bringing them into contact with explosives and mines.
- Daily bread supply is also among the priority needs as many people are reportedly receiving limited water bottles, apples or bread slices.
- Schools are reportedly closed until 10 February. The Education Cluster noted that this suspension will likely be extended. A partner also reported that most children are reluctant to go back to school due to aftershocks.
- According to the Education Cluster, there is contradictory information received from the field on whether schools are being used as shelters. No confirmed information received at this stage.
- Access to water and sanitation services in north-west Syria is extremely challenging, reported WASH Cluster. This is further aggravated by harsh weather, a cholera outbreak and other gaps.
- OCHA's Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), having completed its second Standard Allocation valued at \$28 million, is in urgent need of new contributions for the launch of a Reserve Allocation dedicated to the earthquake response.

Humanitarian response

- UN and partners are preparing a cross-border aid convoy following the confirmation on 8 February that two alternative routes are available to reach the UN Transshipment Hub.
- The response capacity in north-west Syria continues to be dire as community-based rescue teams are fully occupied in their search for and rescue of people trapped under the debris of collapsed houses. According to civil defense, only five per cent of reported sites are being covered by search and rescue operations. The lack of heavy machines to remove rubble and bad weather conditions complicate these efforts.
- A [\\$25 million grant](#) was released by United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) on 7 February to help “kick-start” the earthquake response. A Whole-of-Syria Flash Appeal will be published over the coming days to map gaps, needs, and financial requirements for an initial period of three months until 10 May 2023. Other UN agencies have activated their internal emergency funds.
- Assessments of humanitarian needs and gaps in north-west Syria are on-going. Partners have reported that their offices and warehouses have been damaged. Hospitals are overwhelmed. Schools in Idleb and Aleppo have been suspended for one week.
- UN pre-positioned aid is accessible in north-west Syria but fails to meet the needs of affected people.
 - ✓ IOM and UNHCR partners have a total stock of 2,000 tents and approximately 1,700 Non-Food Item (NFI) kits pre-positioned inside north-west Syria. An additional 1,800 NFI kits are available

through Mercy Corps. However, partners report that there are urgent needs for additional tents and NFIs, blankets, heating fuel, stoves and plastic sheets.

- ✓ UNHCR report that 1,000 additional tents are available in its warehouse in Gaziantep and discussions are ongoing to mobilize regional stock.
- ✓ The World Health Organization (WHO) has released trauma kits from their stocks to at least 16 hospitals in north-western Syria.
- ✓ The Nutrition Cluster reported that their warehouses and nutrition supplies are intact. Some implementing partners have reportedly activated the Rapid Response Team modalities which include the distribution of High Energy Biscuits and micronutrients and the provision of individual counseling for mothers on breastfeeding during difficult times.
- Earthquakes and continued aftershocks caused displacements. The WASH cluster expects a significant internal wave of internally displaced people from communities to camps.
 - ✓ Available information indicates that at least four interim shelters are being established to host families from Idlib.
 - ✓ Partners have established reception centers in the Sheikh Bahr area with capacity for 200 families in need of shelter, in Maaret Tamsrin community that can host some 160 families and two other centers in Idlib governorate.
- The Early Recovery Cluster is coordinating with partners in Idlib region and with the Emergency Road Rehabilitation Committee to assess road interruptions and impediments to access requiring urgent interventions, such as rubble and debris removal.
- The Education Cluster is continuously coordinating with partners to assess the situation of schools on the ground.
- 12,000 people were reportedly supported in Idlib and Aleppo with the distribution of hygiene kits and clean drinking water by UNICEF.

To contribute to the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), please [click here](#).

Contact

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